

HANDHELDS

FAQ

Q I use Windows Media Player to synchronise my audio and video files between my PC and my media player, but I'm not happy with the quality. Is there any way to improve the sound and video quality of synchronised files?

A First, you should download and install Windows Media Player 11, which gives you greater control over the quality of your synchronised files than Media Player 10. Once it's installed, plug in your media player, and it will appear in the left-hand tree. Right-click on the player's icon and select Advanced Options. In the new window, click on the Quality tab, then the 'Select maximum quality level' button. You'll now be able to increase the quality of the converted audio and video files. If you want more control over the process, download Windows Media Encoder from <http://tinyurl.com/g37zo> and encode the files to WMA audio and WMV video yourself.

Chris Finnamore
Labs Manager

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TOMTOM Go 720

★★★★★

£320 inc VAT



Like paper maps, the electronic mapping data installed on GPS systems can get out of date. Updates to the maps are released periodically, but are usually available only once a year, and there's no guarantee that a certain mistake on your route home will be fixed.

TomTom's latest model tries to get round this with its Map Share feature, which allows you to correct mapping mistakes yourself. You make corrections as you drive, so if you notice a problem you can pull over and correct it straight away. Corrections are easy to make. Once you're in the corrections menu, icons are available to help you change the direction of a one-way street, correct street names and even add missing places and roads by clicking on the overhead 2D map display.

This is fine if you just want to iron out a few niggles, but you can also share the benefit of your local knowledge with other Go 720 owners. Once you've installed the supplied TomTom Home software on your PC and connected the Go 720 with a USB cable, you can upload your corrections to TomTom's servers. Once the corrections have been verified for accuracy, they are made available to anyone with a Go 720. You can set the software to download corrections automatically when you next plug in your GPS. However, to download Map Share updates you'll need the latest version of the TeleAtlas maps installed, so you'll still have to spend around £68 a year on updates.

The Go 720 comes with full maps of Western Europe, and is a good navigator. The interface runs quickly, and has huge buttons that are easy to operate with your finger. It also has a large 4.3in widescreen LCD with a high

SUMMARY

- ✓ Clear display
- ✓ Detailed voice prompts
- ✓ Useful Map Share feature

STANDALONE GPS 4.3in 480x272 resolution display, TomTom Navigator software, TeleAtlas Western European maps, 2GB internal storage, SD card slot, Bluetooth, FM transmitter, 118x24x83mm, 220g
PART CODE 1M00.760
SUPPLIER www.expansys.com
DETAILS www.tomtom.com



480x272-pixel resolution, so there's plenty of room for the 3D driving view, and text and road names are easy to read. The built-in speaker is loud and clear, so you're unlikely to miss any voice prompts. If you need more volume, you can tune your car stereo to the frequency of the Go 720's FM transmitter.

The Go 720 also has significantly clearer voice prompts than previous models we've seen. For example, when approaching a motorway junction with a choice of directions, the device will read out the name of the next major town in the direction in which you have to go, so you can check against road signs. When approaching the M25, the unit lets you know whether you should head towards Heathrow or Gatwick. It also reads out the name of the road you need to take when approaching a junction although, confusingly, it announces road numbers as full numbers rather than individual digits; for example, "A two hundred and forty-six" instead of "A-2-4-6".

The Go 720 is relatively expensive, but it's a superb GPS system. Its voice prompts and map display are clear, and the Map Share feature is well designed and useful. It's the best standalone GPS we've seen so far.

Chris Finnamore

Also consider...

TOMTOM One Regional

★★★★★

£150 inc VAT



TomTom's One Regional is a good-value GPS system with UK and Ireland maps. It's easy to use, comes with a touch screen and has big icons that you can operate with your finger. Navigation is accurate and the voice prompts are clear. It's the best-value standalone GPS we've seen.



STANDALONE GPS 3.1in 320x240 resolution display, integrated SiRFstar III receiver, TomTom Navigator software, Navteq UK and Ireland maps, 1GB SD card, 174g
PART CODE 5N00.110
SUPPLIER www.thenavigationcompany.com
DETAILS www.tomtom.com
✓ Fast software; easy to use
FULL REVIEW Mar 2007

NOKIA E65

★★★★★

£265 SIM-free, from free on £30-per-month contract



Nokia's E65 is a compact and stylish smartphone with a slide-out keypad that has large, easy-to-press buttons. It has an excellent screen and a superb web browser that lets you browse pages in their original format, just as you would on a PC. The phone's integrated wireless networking is simple to set up, and the handset supports fast 3G data connections.

The E65 is the best compact internet smartphone around and is great value on a contract.



SMARTPHONE Tri-band GSM, 3G, GPRS, 240x320 resolution LCD, 2-megapixel camera, 52MB internal memory, micro-SD card slot, USB, Bluetooth, IR, 802.11b/g connectivity
PART CODE E65
SUPPLIER www.expansys.com (SIM-free), www.three.co.uk, www.o2.co.uk (contract)
DETAILS www.nokia.co.uk
✓ Great keypad; easy wireless networking
FULL REVIEW Jul 2007

ARCHOS 605 WiFi

★★★★★

£200 inc VAT

The 605 WiFi is Archos's latest Portable Media Player (PMP). Although many modern MP3 players can play video, they're often picky about the file formats they support, and it's hard to immerse yourself in a film when it's playing on a 2in screen. A dedicated PMP is far better suited to films and TV programmes on the move.

Archos has steadily improved its interface, and the 605 WiFi is the company's easiest PMP to use so far. Much of this is down to the icon-driven touch screen interface. The touch screen is fine for most tasks, but using the onscreen scroll bars to scroll through long lists of audio files is tricky, and we found the hardware scroll buttons easier to use. Finding the media file you want is simple, though, as video files are represented by thumbnails, and you can sort music files by artist, album, title or genre.

Getting content on the 605 is also straightforward. You can set it to behave as an external hard disk or a Windows Media device when you plug in the USB cable.

In hard disk mode, you can copy audio and video files into the relevant folders on the 605's internal 30GB hard disk. When you disconnect the cable the 605 scans for new files and adds them to its library, reading the audio files' ID3 tags to build up a database. In Windows Media Mode, the 605 synchronises your audio and video files with Windows Media Player 11, and automatically converts any music or video that is incompatible with the player to a supported format.



The 605 will play back WMV and MPEG4 video files, including DivX and XviD, as well as WAV, MP3 and WMA audio files. If you want to play MPEG1 or MPEG2 video or AAC audio, you'll need to buy an optional codec plug-in from Archos. The 605 supports video files at up to DVD resolution, and had no problems playing our very high-quality DivX and XviD test files. These looked superb on the bright, high-resolution 800x480 screen.

The 605 has built-in wireless networking. It can connect to UPnP devices plugged into your wireless network, and if your PC is running a media streaming program, such as Windows Media Connect or TwonkyVision, you can stream video directly from your PC.

You can also use the 605 WiFi to browse the web, but only if you spend an extra £20 on the optional Opera web browser.

Archos's 605 has a superb screen and is perfect for watching films on the move. Having to pay extra for MPEG playback and a web browser seems like poor value, though.

Chris Finnamore

SUMMARY

- ✓ Great screen
- ✓ Easy to transfer media files
- ✗ MPEG playback costs extra

PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER 4.3in
800x480 resolution LCD, 30GB hard disk, plays MPEG4 (DivX, XviD), WMV, MPEG1 and MPEG2 with optional plug-in (all up to DVD resolution), plays MP3, WMA, protected WMA, WAV, AAC with optional plug-in, 5½ hours' video playback, 17 hours' audio playback, USB2, 802.11b/g, 122x15x82mm, 150g
PART CODE 105847EU-V2
SUPPLIER www.expansys.com
DETAILS www.archos.com

CHOOSING A... Smartphone

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

STYLE: Handset
OPERATING SYSTEM: Windows Mobile 5.0
SCREEN: 240x320; 65,536 colours
INPUT: Keypad
CAMERA: 1.3 megapixel
BLUETOOTH: Yes
DATA CALLS: GPRS
Recommended minimum in grey

1 A smartphone's operating system – Palm OS, Windows Mobile or Symbian – dictates its basic features and what third-party software you can install. Windows Mobile 5.0 has the familiar look and feel of Windows, right down to a Start button, and is found on both handset- and PDA-style smartphones.

The only Palm OS smartphones available are Palm's Treo 650 and 680. There are four types of Symbian operating systems: series 60, 80, 90 and UIQ. Series 60, 80 and 90 are found on Nokia smartphones, while Sony Ericsson uses UIQ for its P900 smartphone series. Windows Mobile 5.0, Palm OS and Symbian all support third-party applications, and there is a vast amount of both freeware and commercial software available.

Symbian is often heavily customised by the phone's manufacturer and so may differ from phone to phone.

2 All smartphones come with a colour screen. A high-colour depth of 65,536 colours is important for viewing photos or video clips.

Users navigate and input information into a handset type of smartphone using the keypad and buttons or a jog dial. PDA-style smartphones usually have a touch screen, and both Windows Mobile and Palm have handwriting recognition features as well as onscreen keyboards. A few have a built-in QWERTY keyboard.

3 Cameras are common in smartphones. Resolution is limited, with three megapixels being the best you'll get. However, as most images will be viewed only onscreen or sent as video messages, this shouldn't be a problem for most people.

4 Bluetooth makes it easier to link your phone to a PC for synchronisation or wireless web access. For internet access, a GPRS or 3G mobile contract is essential. Data is usually billed per megabyte downloaded, but if you sign up for a data bundle when buying your smartphone it will work out cheaper.

ARCHOS 404 Camcorder

★★★★★

£180 inc VAT

PRICE CUT!

Archos's 404 Camcorder is a portable media player (PMP) with a built-in digital video camera. It plays most popular video and audio file types. The interface can be confusing at first, but getting compatible content on to the player is easy using Windows Media Player 10 or 11. The 404 has mediocre battery life and comes without a mains charger, but it's good value.



PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER 3½in, 320x240-pixel LCD, 30GB hard disk, plays MPEG4, H.264, MPEG2, WMV video (all up to DVD resolution), plays MP3, WMA, Protected WMA, Wav audio, 8 hours' music playback, 2½ hours' video playback, 100x78x15mm, 190g PART CODE Archos 404 CAM 30GB
SUPPLIER www.play.com DETAILS www.archos.com
✓ Comprehensive file support ✗ Mediocre battery life
FULL REVIEW May 2007

HTC Touch

★★★★★

£315 SIM-free; free on £35-per-month contract

HTC's Touch is a tiny Windows Mobile 6 PDA smartphone with a twist. It has a new interface that is designed to be operated entirely with your finger. The TouchFlow interface makes it easy to scroll through contacts and make calls with just your finger, but you still have to use the stylus to type, and it's a shame there's no new keyboard application.

The new interface is not particularly revolutionary, but the Touch is still a gorgeous and good-value Windows Mobile smartphone.



SMARTPHONE Windows Mobile 6 operating system, Tri-band GSM, 240x320 resolution LCD, 25MB internal storage, 1GB microSD card, USB, Bluetooth, 802.11b/g, 2-megapixel camera, 58x14x100mm, 112g PART CODE HTC P3450 UK
SUPPLIER www.expansys.com DETAILS www.htc.com
✓ Looks great ✗ OS runs slowly FULL REVIEW Sep 2007